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T O P S E C R E T 160342Z JAN 71 SENSITIVE EXCLUSIVELY EYES ONLY

FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER
TO : AMBASSADOR BUNKER, SAIGON
CITE: WHS1004

JANUARY 15, 1971

I WOULD BE MOST ANXIOUS TO RECEIVE YOUR ACCOUNT OF SECRETARY LAIRD'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT THIEU AS IT CONCERNED U.S. TROOP LEVELS IN SOUTH VIETNAM BETWEEN THE PERIOD APRIL 1 AND SOUTH VIETNAMESE ELECTIONS IN OCTOBER. YOU WILL RECALL THAT PRESIDENT THIEU TOLD GENERAL HAIG THAT HE WAS MOST ANXIOUS THAT WE REFRAIN FROM DRAWING DOWN ADDITIONAL TROOPS BETWEEN THE PERIOD JULY 1 AND THE OCTOBER ELECTIONS AND THAT HE HINTED THAT THIS REQUIREMENT WOULD INFLUENCE HIS DECISION WITH RESPECT TO THE DRY SEASON ARVN CAMPAIGN OUTSIDE OF SOUTH VIETNAM.

SECRETARY LAIRD IS SCHEDULED TO MEET WITH THE PRESIDENT ON MONDAY, JANUARY 18 TO PRESENT HIS TRIP FINDINGS. I WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD GIVE ME YOUR FRANK IMPRESSION OF THIS IMPORTANT ISSUE AND YOUR OWN PERSONAL ASSESSMENT OF THIEU'S ATTITUDE WITH RESPECT TO IT PRIOR TO THAT TIME.

WARM REGARDS.

RMIN

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